

the prisoner went on quietly. "I met him at the theater last night and walked home with him. We reached the Avon about half-past eleven o'clock, and I went to his room; but I remained for only ten or fifteen minutes. Then I went home. It was about five minutes of twelve when I reached my room. I went to bed, and remained in bed until one o'clock, when, for a reason which will appear, I rose, dressed, and went out, say about ten minutes past one. I returned to my room a few minutes past three."

Detective Mallory smiled sardonically.

"When I was arrested this morning I sent notes to three persons," the prisoner went on steadily. "Two of these happen to be city officials, one the city engineer. Will he please come forward?"

There was a little stir in the room, and the court scratched one ear gravely. City Engineer Malcolm appeared inquiringly.

"This is Mr. Malcolm?" asked the prisoner. "Yes? Here is a map of the city issued by your office. I would like to ask, please, the approximate distance between this point," and he indicated on the map the location of the Avon, "and this." He touched another point far removed.

The city engineer studied the map carefully. "At least two and a half miles," he explained.

"You would make that statement on oath?"

"Yes; I have surveyed it myself."

"Thank you," said the prisoner courteously, and he turned to face the crowd in the rear. "Is Policeman No. 1122 in court? I don't know his name."

Again there was a stir, and Policeman Gillis came forward.

"Do you remember me?" inquired the prisoner.

"Sure," was the reply.

"Where did you see me last night?"

"At this corner," and Gillis put his finger down on the map at the second point the prisoner had indicated to the city engineer.

The court leaned forward eagerly to peer at the map. Detective Mallory tugged violently at his mustache.

Into the prisoner's manner there came tense anxiety. "Do you know what time you saw me there?" he asked.

Policeman Gillis was thoughtful for a moment.

"No," he replied at last. "I heard a clock strike just after I saw you, but I didn't notice."

The prisoner's face went deathly white for an instant, then he recovered himself with an effort.

"You didn't count the strokes?" he asked.

"No, I wasn't paying any attention to them."

The color rushed back into Chase's face, and he was silent for a moment. Then: "It was two o'clock you heard strike?" It was hardly a question, rather a statement.

"I don't know," said Gillis. "It might have been. Probably it was."

"What did I say to you?"

"You asked me where you could find a dentist, and I directed you to Dr. Sitgreave across the street."

"You saw me enter Dr. Sitgreave's house?"

"Yes."

The accused glanced up at the court, and that eminent jurist proceeded to look solemn.

"Dr. Sitgreave, please," called the prisoner.

The dentist appeared, exchanging nods with the prisoner.

"You remember me, doctor?"

"Yes."

"May I ask you to tell the court where you live? Show us on this map, please."

Dr. Sitgreave put his finger down at the spot which had been pointed out by the prisoner and by Policeman Gillis, two and a half miles from the Avon.

"I live three doors from this corner," explained the dentist.

"You pulled a tooth for me last night?" went on the prisoner.

"Yes."

"Here?" and the prisoner opened his mouth.

The dentist examined him closely. "Yes."

"You may remember, doctor," went on the prisoner quietly, "that you had occasion to notice the clock just after I called at your house. Do you remember what time it was?"

"A few minutes before two—seven or eight minutes, I think."

Detective Mallory and the court exchanged bewildered glances.

"You looked at your watch, too. Was that exactly with the clock?"

"Yes, within a minute."

"And what time did I leave your office?" the prisoner asked.

"Seventeen minutes past two—I happen to remember," was the reply.

The prisoner glanced dreamily around the room twice, then his eyes met Detective Mallory's. He stared straight into that official for an instant, then turned back to the dentist.

"When you drew the tooth, there was blood, of course. Is it possible that I got stains on my fingers and clothing?"

"Yes, certainly."

The prisoner turned to the court, and surprised a puzzled expression on that official countenance.

"Is anything else necessary?" he inquired courteously. "It has been established that the moment of the crime was two o'clock. I have shown by three witnesses—two of them city officials—that I was two and a half miles away at that moment. I could not have walked two and a half miles under half an hour; I couldn't have gone on a car under ten minutes—hardly that."

There was a long silence as the court considered the matter. Finally he delivered himself briefly. "It resolves itself into a question of the accuracy of the clocks," he said. "The accuracy of the clock at the Avon is attested by the known accuracy of the clock in the telegraph office, while it seems established that Dr. Sitgreave's clock was also accurate, because it was with his watch. Of course, there is no question of veracity of witnesses; it is merely a question of the clock in Dr. Sitgreave's office. If that is shown to be absolutely correct, we must accept the alibi."

The prisoner turned to the elevator man from the Avon. "What sort of clock was that you mentioned?"

"An electric clock, regulated from Washington

Mallory—he was groping hopelessly, blindly, in the mazes of the problem.

It was then that he called to see Professor S. F. X. Van Dusen—The Thinking Machine. That distinguished man listened to a recital of the known facts with petulant, drooping mouth and the everlasting squint in his blue eyes. As the reporter talked on, corrugations appeared in the logician's expansive brow, and these gave way in turn to a network of wrinkles. At the end The Thinking Machine sat twiddling his long fingers and staring upward.

"This is one of the most remarkable cases that has come to my attention," he said at last, "because it possesses the unusual quality of being perfect in each way; that is, the evidence against Chase is perfect, and the alibi he offers is perfect. But we know instantly that if Chase killed De Forrest, there was something the matter with the clocks, despite expert opinion. We know that as certainly as we know that two and two make four, not sometimes but all the time, because our reason tells us that Chase was not in two places at two o'clock. Therefore, we must assume either one of two things—that something was the matter with the clocks—and if there was we must assume that Chase was responsible for it—or that Chase had nothing whatever to do with De Forrest's death, at least personally."

The last word aroused Hatch to a new and sudden interest. It suggested a line of thought which had not yet occurred to him.

"Now," continued the scientist, "if we can find one flaw in Chase's story, we shall have achieved the privilege of temporarily setting aside his defense and starting over. If on the contrary he told the full and exact truth and our investigation proves that he did, it instantly clears him. Now, just what have you done, please?"

"I talked to Dr. Sitgreave," replied Hatch. "He did not know Chase—never saw him until he pulled the tooth, and then didn't know his name. But he told me really more than appeared in court; for instance, that his watch had been regulated only a few days ago, that it had been accurate since, and

that he knew it was accurate next day, because it enabled him to keep an important engagement. That being accurate, the clock must be accurate, because they were together almost to the second."

"I also talked to every other person whose name appears in the case. I questioned them as to all sorts of possibilities, and the result was that I was compelled to accept the alibi—not that I am unwilling to, of course, but it seems peculiar that De Forrest should have written the name as he was dying."

"You talked to the young men who went into Chase's room at two o'clock?" inquired The Thinking Machine casually.

"Yes."

"Did you ask either of them the exact condition of Chase's bed when they went in?"

"Yes," replied the reporter. "I see what you mean. They agreed that it was tumbled as if some one had been in it."

The Thinking Machine raised his eyebrows slightly.

"Suppose, Mr. Hatch, that you had a violent toothache," he asked after a moment, still casually, "and were looking for relief, would you stop to notice the number of a policeman who told you where there was a dentist's office?"

Hatch considered it calmly, as he stared into the inscrutable face of the scientist. "Oh, I see," he said at last. "No, I hardly think I should, and yet I might."

Later Hatch and The Thinking Machine, by permission of Detective Mallory, made an exhaustive search of De Forrest's apartments in the Avon, seeking some clue. When The Thinking Machine went down the single flight of stairs to the office he seemed deeply perplexed.

"Where is your clock?" he inquired of the elevator man.

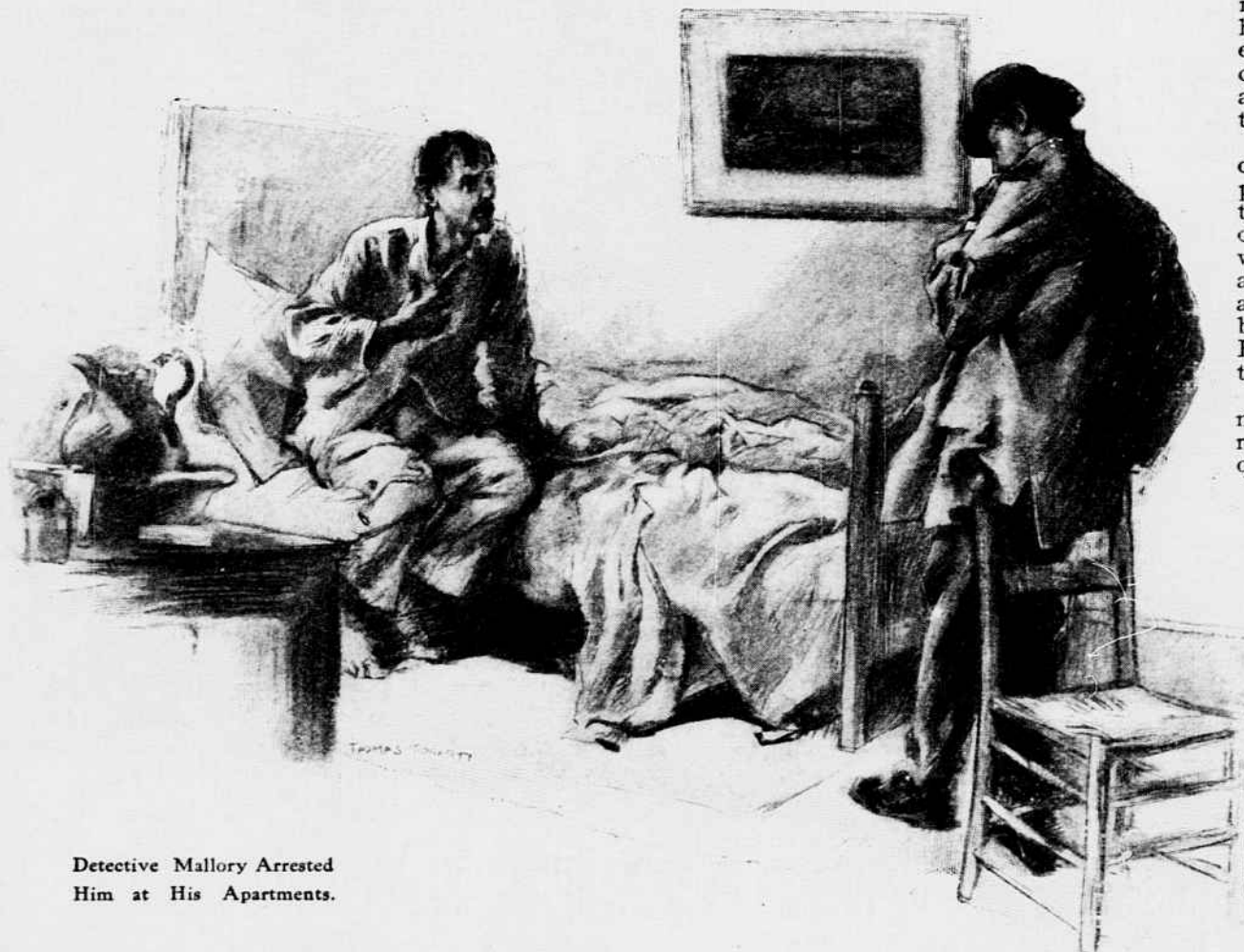
"In the inside office, opposite the telephone booth," was the reply.

The scientist went in and, taking a stool, clambered up and squinted fiercely into the very face of the timepiece. He said "Ah!" once non-committally, then clambered down.

"It would not be possible for anyone here to see a person pass through the hall," he mused. "Now," and he picked up a telephone book, "just a word with Dr. Sitgreave."

He asked the dentist only two questions, and

Continued on page 18



Detective Mallory Arrested Him at His Apartments.

Observatory," was the reply.

"And the clock at the telegraph office, Mr. Mallory?"

"An electric clock, regulated from Washington Observatory."

"And yours, Dr. Sitgreave?"

"An electric clock, regulated from Washington Observatory."

The prisoner remained in his cell until seven o'clock that evening, while experts tested the three clocks. They were accurate to the second; and it was explained that there could have been no variation of either without this variation being recorded by the delicate testing apparatus. Therefore, it came to pass that Franklin Chase was released on his own recognizance, while Detective Mallory wandered off into the sacred precincts of his private office to hold his head in his hands and think.

Hutchinson Hatch, reporter, had followed the intricacies of the mystery from the discovery of De Forrest's body, through the preliminary hearing, up to and including the expert examination of the clocks, which immediately preceded the release of Franklin Chase. When this point was reached his mental condition was not unlike that of Detective